

I rely on the Internet every single day as a public platform for free speech, equal opportunity, economic growth and innovation. Without vital Net Neutrality protections, companies like Verizon and Comcast, which have a commercial incentive to limit the free-flowing Web, can decide whether I will have a voice online. These companies have no right to dictate my use of the internet or influence it in greedy unlawful ways. The Internet is a staple of education and innovation in this day and age and I do not want to see that jeopardized by selfish corporations. Now is the best time to act and fix this once and for all, we're all asking for trouble if we try to deal with it later or give these companies too much leeway.

The FCC must have the power to protect consumer access to the most important communications medium of our time. The FCC must stand with me and keep the Internet in the hands of the people who use it every day. Please reclassify broadband as a "telecommunications service" and keep the Internet open and free. Failing to uphold net neutrality will lead to the restriction of consumer choice, the stifling of online innovation, investment, and competition, and the suppression of education. I encourage you with all of my heart to please take a moment to understand what is truly at stake in the war over net neutrality, and understand what it could mean for America if the issue is brushed aside and handed over to the corporations.

The internet itself is poised to become the backbone of a healthy flourishing democracy: the end-all be-all source for free speech, civil reform, and economic expansion. It is possibly our last hope to secure the high-ground on the media gatekeepers. However, whether the Internet's fate is to boast its diversity and openness, or whether it's controlled and meticulously censored by Internet service providers, depends on policy decisions. Just like radio and television broadcasting, whenever such an influential technology came into existence, powerful corporations moved to seize absolute authority, while stifling public participation. This is happening now, and internet service providers are blatantly spending millions of dollars fueling their argument for owning the internet, when all they provide is access to it. Net Neutrality is the rule that prevents Internet Service Providers from slowing, blocking, or censoring specific web content because of who owns it, where it's

located, or where it came from. Preserving net neutrality is absolutely vital if you value your privilege of connecting and sharing content freely, visiting any websites without purchase, and communicating or voicing your opinion online without being censored by your respective service provider.

It's vital to preserve net neutrality because network discrimination restricts consumer choice in the market. Websites regarded as successful on the internet should be chosen by the internet users themselves, they should not be judged by the arbitrary whims of Comcast or AT&T. Without net neutrality nothing would stop the phone/cable companies from twisting the free market in every way they could in order to benefit themselves. Comcast would be free to decide whether a person paying them to access the internet would be able to view websites such as www.comcraptic.com or

www.comcast.sucks.org. Consumers should be free to access all the internet has to offer in their own way, not as determined by one business, should they be interested in doing so. As another example, what if Comcast decided they did not agree with the republican political agenda, so they decided their subscribers could no longer bring up information that supports republican points of view? This kind censors!

hip is a very big potential problem just over the horizon.

The next move internet service providers would be likely to take is to establish contracts with popular consumer businesses relating to the internet. They would inevitably force the consumer to visit comcast-approved retail websites. Allow me to explain through an example. JCPenney's decides to accept a Comcast-recommended yearly fee in exchange for good website bandwidth and fast loading speeds for their online customers. On the other hand, Macy's, who refuses to pay comcast, mysteriously finds themselves with a slow, cumbersome website for any comcast subscriber viewing it. What you would have is a wealth of customers purchasing from JCPenney's and using their website first and foremost because Macy's website is always slow and barely accessible!

Without net neutrality in effect, network discrimination would stifle online innovation, investment, and competition. As quoted by Accuracy.org, Google Vice President, Vint Cerf says, "the Internet) allows innovation without permission". The Internet is an unrestricted laboratory for pioneers and hopeful enterprisers. After all, a couple college students started Google, and a regular hardworking computer programmer founded Ebay. Even remarkably popular sites like MySpace, FaceBook, and YouTube weren't even around about six years ago. This advancement in technological innovation will continue to flourish as long as the Internet can reward those clever and creative enough with a free forum for marketing their ideas.

Companies, like AT&T and Bellsouth, claim that they're "spending tens of billions of dollars to build out the fiber-optic networks that carry all the voice, data, and video that's flying in every direction." according to InformationWeek magazine. They imply that they will be unable to effectively invest in the next generation of networks without additional funding from online tolls and filters. This might make sense, if it weren't for the fact that these companies already consistently make countless billions from their consumer subscriptions and rates charged to all of their affiliated content providers. Their opposition to Net Neutrality is simply a plan to undercut their competition without investing further in system-structure expansion and more accommodating and effective services. Even a fraction of the money from their tax breaks or public subsidies could afford the installation of high-speed broadband in every U.S. household.

According to Freepress.net, "broadband cable and DSL now comprise more than 95 percent of the residential broadband market". The vast majority of Americans are lucky if they even have two

broadband providers to choose from. Even now, it's readily apparent that virtually no competition exists between internet service providers. But allowing these monopolies to thoroughly discriminate against their competition would only make things worse; they would even be free from consumer reprisal, one result of their market dominating policies. That is to say, no competition could exist to challenge the methods of the big ISPs or sway their customers toward new providers when they are taken advantage of with greedy business practices. Consumers will never have anywhere else to turn for internet access.

Without net neutrality, network discrimination would restrict educational resources, undermining our entire educational system. Low-income families and struggling college students could be charged for or blocked from valuable educational data online. Imagine if the library charged you money for each page you read from its books. Or even if you had to pay your way every time you used Wikipedia, dictionary.com, or whitepages.com. This is exactly what is at stake! Huge amounts of information vital to our growing society will be walled in and isolated by completely unnecessary fees and restrictions.

For as long as I can remember, this country has been concerned with improving schools. Every time a student wants to learn or explore their interests using the internet should it mean they have to pay a filthy rich monopoly? They're already lucky enough to have access to a computer and a connection! Look how many struggling families must still rely on public computers for internet access at the library! Abolishing net neutrality does nothing but set our education system back. When education is limited so drastically, it creates criminals, as supported by studies at law.jrank.org, which explains, "œeducational attainment plays a prominent role in explaining who is likely to commit criminal acts or subsequently become incarcerated". Limited education also ensures young people don't grow up to earn themselves important jobs needed to run this great country and its economy.

The big cable and phone companies, like Comcast and AT&T, want to destroy Net Neutrality, the rule that stops them from discriminating against online content. They just aren't content with monopolizing everyone's access to the internet, they desire total control, to be the judges of which sites load fast or slow and which won't display at all. They literally want a pay-per-view internet! Their intent, as always, is to grow wealthy beyond belief, and this time it's at the cost of our unrestricted stage, our open forum, for free speech, innovation, knowledge, and democracy; all because of a needless corporate toll mechanism. The issue of net neutrality is not hypothetical, it is very real and of upmost concern. As Josh Silver, quoted by the Multinational Monitor says, "œA duopoly market - where phone and cable companies control nearly 99 percent of high-speed connections, will (certainly) not discipline itself." The consumers, all of us, should forever dictate our o!

wn personal use of the internet. The internet itself belongs to everyone.

